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Building Resilience: CISO Skills Development and Burnout Prevention

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Cyber Workforce Risk

"Human error was cited by 74% of CISOs as THE most significant vulnerability facing their organization"

Source: Business Wire, Yahoo Finance

"Nearly **half of respondents** stated that **cutbacks** have affected their **security team disproportionately** in comparison to the rest of their organization, with **71%** having experienced a **negative impact on their workload** and **57%** seeing their ability to **respond to cybersecurity threats impacted** as a result."

Source: Cybersecurity Workforce Study from ISC2

"**61%** of cyber security professionals believe that **'regular' employee turnover in the next 12 months** will also cause **security issues.**"

Source: CyberArk

"59% of security professionals are suffering from burnout, ultimately impacting job performance and cyber defences during a skills shortage."

Source: CyberArk

"83% of IT security professionals admit that they or someone in their department have made errors due to burnout that resulted in a security breach. And 39% reported having seen this more than once."

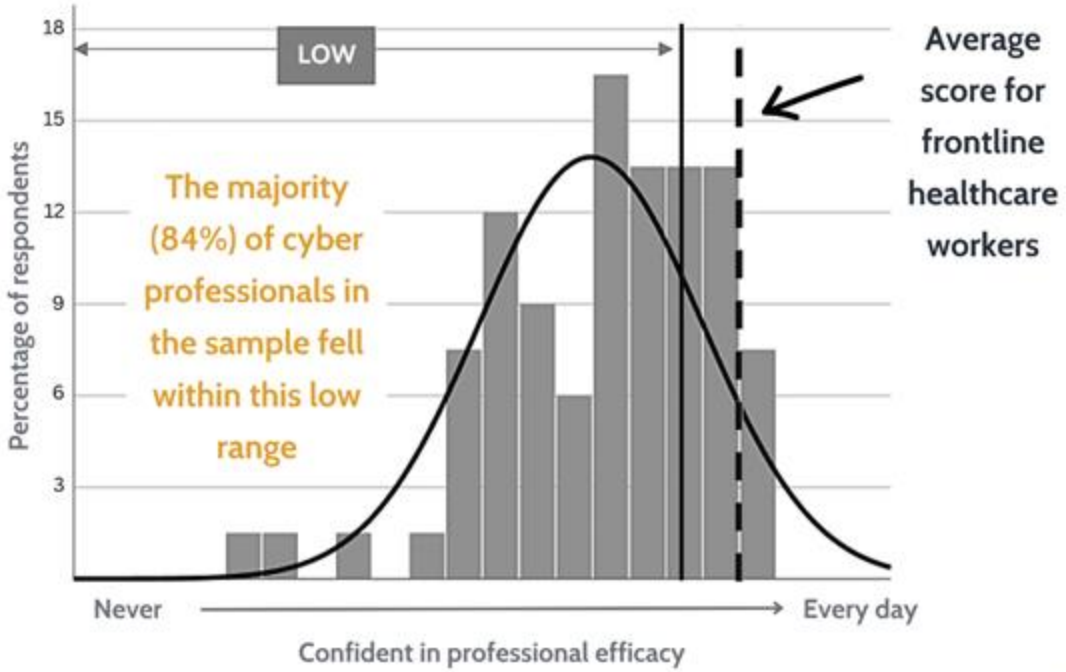
Source: Devo and Wakefield Research

"The lack of a defined career path and progressive training account for a significant 31% "

Source: SANS | GIAC Cyber Workforce Research Report

What the research says

Cyber professionals are **burning out faster** than frontline healthcare workers



Source: Is Your CISO Burnt Out Yet?
A. Reeves, M. Pattinson and M. Butavicius, 2023

Cyber-specific Neurological Drivers

Current Challenges for Leadership

Mistakes are Burnout? 3 Pillars of Complexity

Workload Complexity

- Little policy and procedures that are clear
- Low automation, repetitive boring work
- Alert fatigue, email fatigue, slack fatigue
- Priority conflicts and changes
- Underutilizing talent
- Low professional efficacy
- Little measurable agreements
- No time for upskilling

People Management

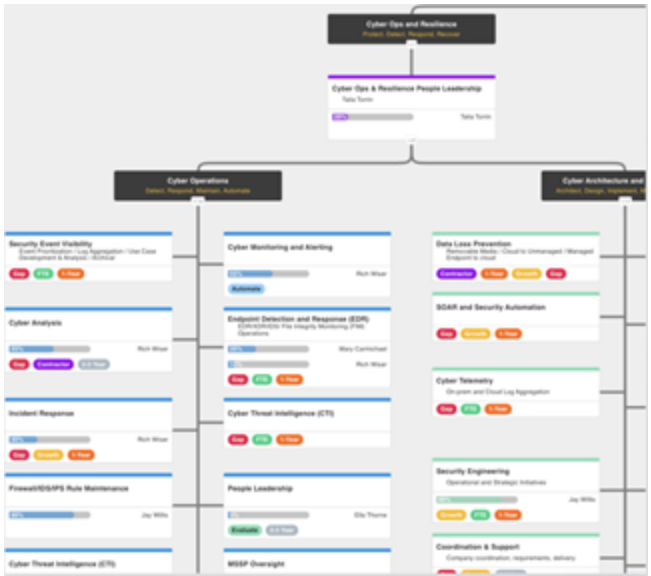
- Managers are also burnt out due to understaffing
- Poor benchmarking data
- Job titles and descriptions don’t align
- No time and/or support for career planning
- Lack clear promotion criteria
- Back to office disruption
- No or little EQ skills training or leadership training
- Toxic cultures

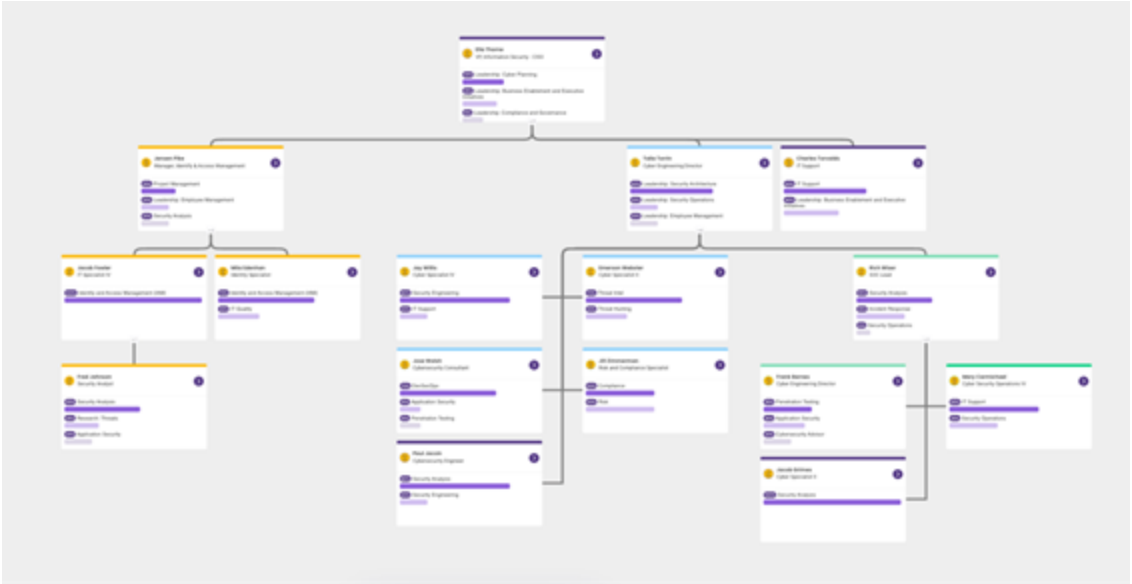
Economic

- **Cyber talent hard to justify = understaffed**
- Shortage of experienced or specialized cyber talent
- Merger and acquisition disruption
- Low talent retention rates
- Layoffs, budget cuts, outsourcing

Lack of Visualization of our Cyber Capabilities

Challenges in Cyber Workforce Management





Cyber Capabilities

Organizational Structure & Responsibilities

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Live Poll

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Breakout Session

Google: Project Aristotle

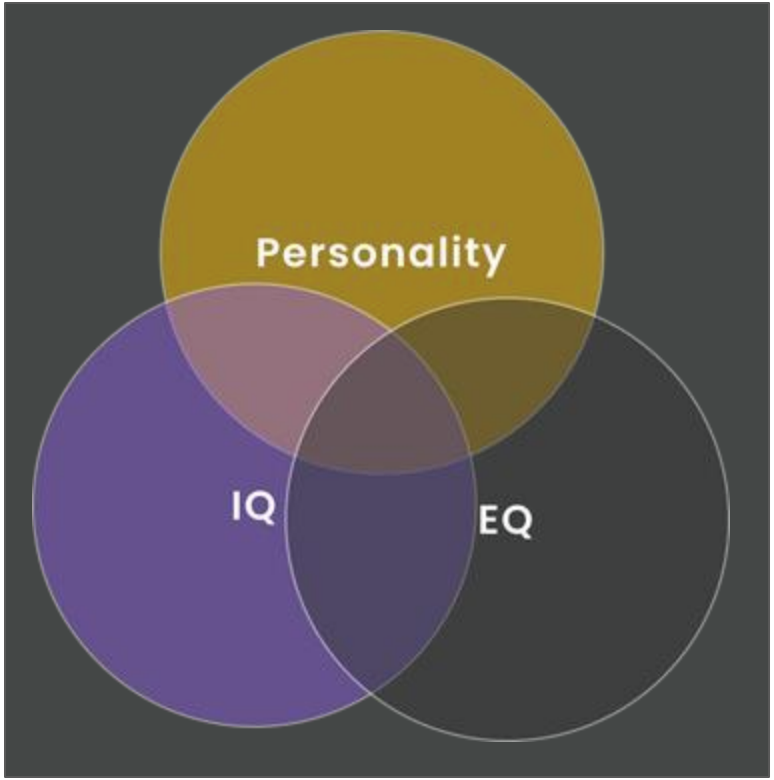
A study released by Google analyzes data on inventive and productive teams:

- Google A-teams are built with top scientists with specialized knowledge
- Google B-teams are comprised of regular employees
- Project Aristotle revealed that Google's most important and productive new ideas come from B-teams that exhibit a range of soft skills:
  - **Equality, generosity, curiosity** toward the ideas of one's teammates
  - **Empathy and emotional intelligence**
  - And topping the list? **Emotional Safety** - no bullying. Each and every team member must feel confident to speak up, make mistakes, and know their voice matters.

IQ and EQ Defined

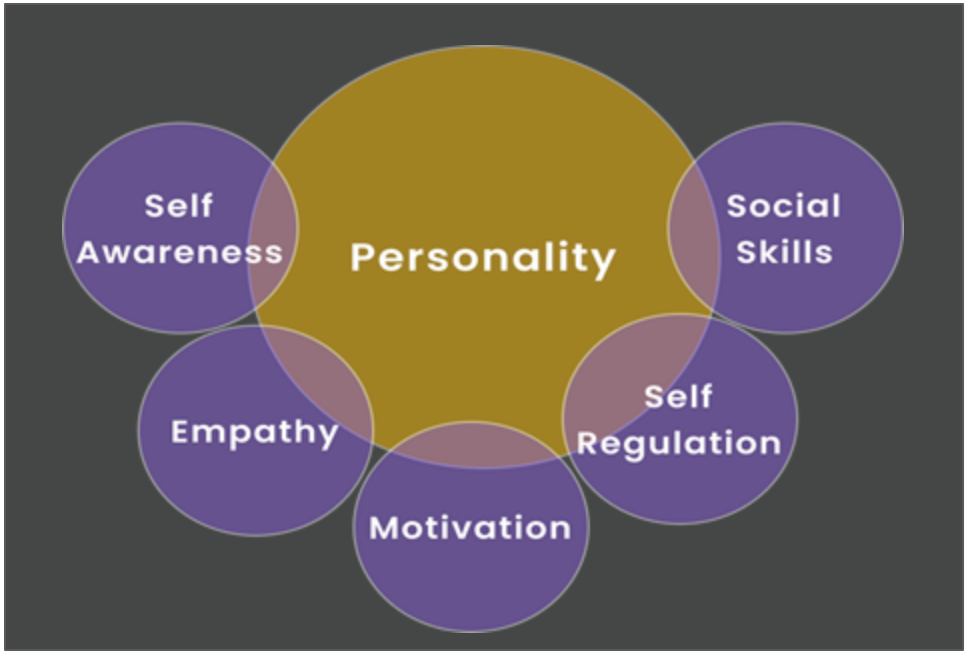
EQ (noun)
the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically.

IQ (noun)
abbreviation for intelligence quotient: a person's level of intelligence measured by tests)



Emotionally Intelligent Managers

Words and behaviors matter



EQ Skills Tree

Key EQ Skills for Leadership

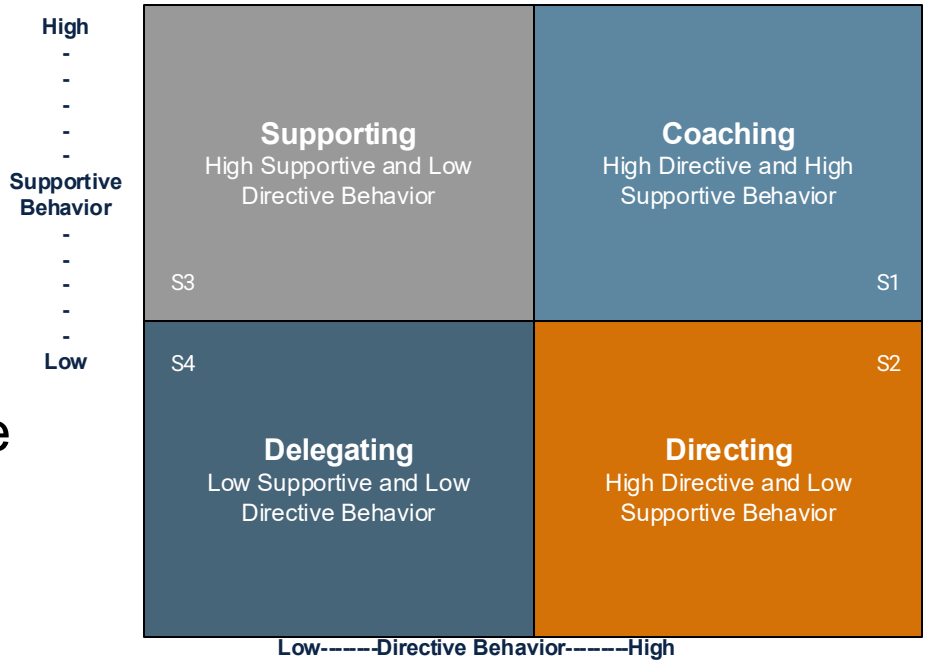
- Making and Managing Measurable Agreements
- Lean Language
- Win-Win Communication

Professional Efficacy Looks Like This

1. To feel valued
2. Measureable agreements of roles and responsibilities
3. Positive, productive communication
4. A career path
5. Consistent training and learning
6. Wage equality with peers
7. To work around kind, respectful people

Situational Leadership

- Assess the Task
- Evaluate Readiness
- Adapt the Leadership Style
- Implement and Observe the Style



https://situational.com/situational-leadership/

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Continued Breakout Session

Key Takeaways and Solutions

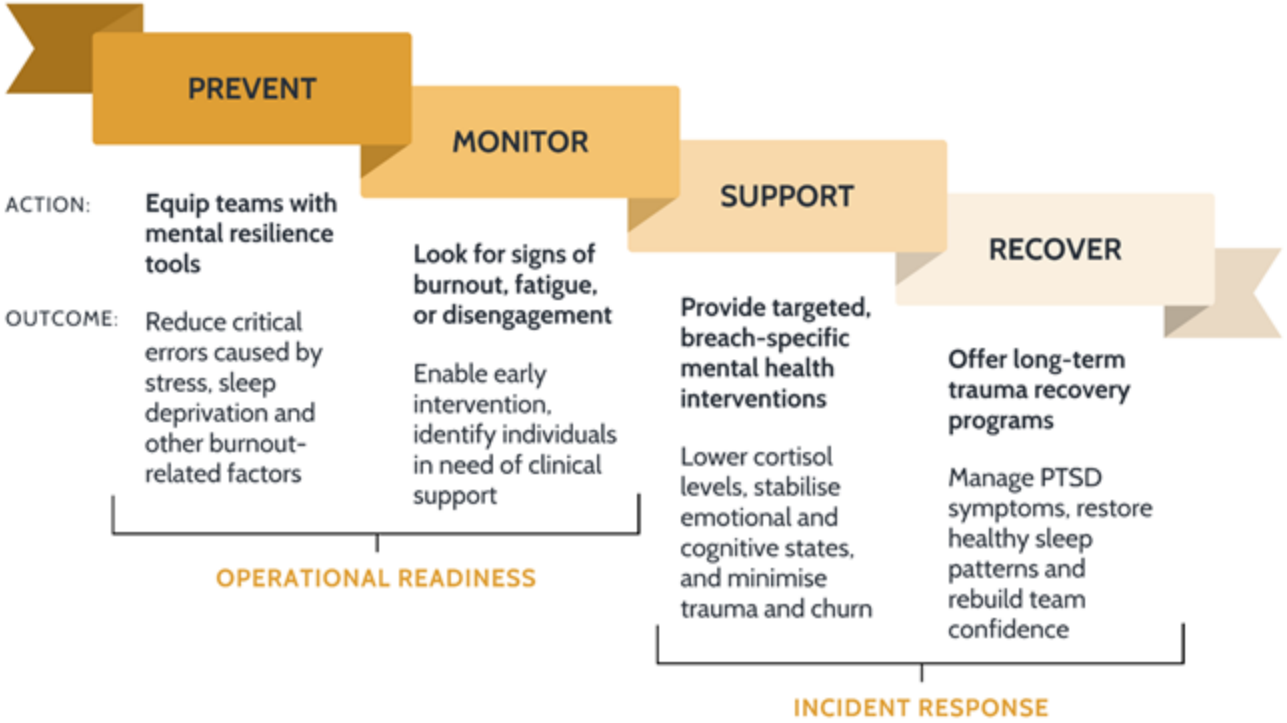
- How to incorporate mental health programs
- How to incorporate workforce risk management programs
- Importance of emotional intelligence skills

The Solution

Empowering Your Cyber Workforce for Optimal Performance and Security:

- **Understand**, document, and keep updated every 90-120 days your cyber workforce's current capabilities and maturity.
- **Align** job roles, titles, and compensation always.
- **Boost** employee satisfaction and engagement through workforce transparency of duties, talent gap acknowledgement, and workload management. Remove or avoid burnout.
- **Develop** a strategic roadmap for continuous growth and development.

Human Resilience Roadmap


PREVENT
MONITOR
SUPPORT
RECOVER
ACTION:
Equip teams with mental resilience tools
OUTCOME:
Reduce critical errors caused by stress, sleep deprivation and other burnout-related factors
Look for signs of burnout, fatigue, or disengagement
Enable early intervention, identify individuals in need of clinical support
OPERATIONAL READINESS
Provide targeted, breach-specific mental health interventions
Lower cortisol levels, stabilise emotional and cognitive states, and minimise trauma and churn
Offer long-term trauma recovery programs
Manage PTSD symptoms, restore healthy sleep patterns and rebuild team confidence
INCIDENT RESPONSE

iRest (Integrative Restoration)

- US military-endorsed attention training technique
- Several stages: Physical relaxation > deeper exploration of unresolved emotions and beliefs
- Restores a sense of ‘unbreakable well-being’
- Over time, practice can positively ‘rewire’ the brain

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Demonstration of the iRest Protocol

Apply What You Have Learned Today

- Recognize early signs of cognitive overload and take proactive steps
- Use structured mental reset techniques to sustain performance under pressure
- Get executives to support mental health services for you and your teams
- Get executives to support workforce risk management programs
- With or without support implement what you can yourself
  - Your own self practice of mental health care talking to your team about it
  - Being in conversation of what they are doing and what they like doing

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Q&A Session